

F A I T H, H O P E,

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C H A R I T Y,

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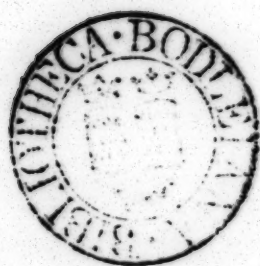
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L O N D O N:

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MDCCLXVII.



I COR. xiii. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH,
HOPE, CHARITY, THESE
THREE; BUT THE GREATEST
OF THESE IS CHARITY.

WE have here a concise, but comprehensive Account, wherein the true Spirit and Temper of Christianity doth consist. The Religion which the ever blessed and adorable Son of God came to propagate, is designed to have a practical Influence on the Minds of its Votaries. And wherever it is cordially received, that Influence cannot fail to discover itself. To this most necessary Point the Apostle calls the Attention of his Corinthians. They had been unhappily divided by a Spirit of Contention

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tion and Disputation; and their Divisions led the Way to the grossest Vices and Immoralities. Having therefore enumerated a rich Variety of spiritual Gifts, which were bestowed on the faithful, and having exhorted them to put in their Claim for a Share in these truly desirable and bright Endowments, he endeavours to guard them from perverting their Talents to unworthy Purposes, by "*shewing them still a more excellent Way.*" This excellent Way he spends the whole Thirteenth Chapter in describing. And what serious,—may I not add, what ingenuous Man can read this Chapter, without feeling a generous,—a divine Glow of Heart, at the beautiful Description he meets with of Christian-Love? Here it is declared, that vain are all the Ornaments of Nature, or of Grace, if they are planted in a Soil that makes not suitable Returns for so rich

rich a Cultivation. Practical Religion it is, exemplified in a constant and conscientious Discharge of every relative and social Duty, that must prove the Genuineness of our Faith, and the Sincerity of our Profession. Where this amiable Characteristic, this laudable Principle of Love is wanting,—Love to God, and, for His Sake, Love to Man, all our Profession is no better than “*sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.*”

HE then who would raise the noble Edifice of true Religion, should take especial Care to accommodate himself with such Materials, as may constitute a solid and unperishable Foundation; “*lest haply, after he hath begun to build, he be not able to finish.*”

Thousands there are, with Minds yet untainted by any flagrant Enormities,

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who set out chearfully, and make some strenuous Efforts towards a Progress, in the divine Life; and yet, through the Depravity of their Hearts, and that Propensity to Evil, which is interwoven with human Nature, tire in the Race. The Reason of this is clear. Christianity is a constant Warfare. It is a doubtful Engagement with a numerous Train of Foes: The most potent of which are these that lie intrenched within our own Bosoms. The World indeed is a smiling Sycophant, which practises upon the Weakness of Humanity. It allures, like the Syren, with its enchanting Sounds, and betrays by its insinuating Arts. But the importunate Passions of our Nature, these innate Lusts, and clamorous Appetites, are the most prevailing Incentives to Vice. These are the traiterous "*Enemies of our own Household,*" and which threaten us most with a total Overthrow.

Volup-

Voluptuousness may scatter her Roses,
 and Luxury shed her delicious Odours;
 Iron-hearted Malice may sting, or smooth
 Diffimulation spread her Snares;—
 Temptation may point every Dart;—Yet
 we shall surmount the united Force of
 all these, if we can once learn to subdue
 the Corruption of our own Hearts. Hence
 flow *the Issues of Life, or Death.*——
 Where then shall we furnish ourselves
 with Arms; from what Quarter summon
 our Forces, in Order to obtain such a
 glorious and compleat Victory? For it is
 an indisputable Truth, that of ourselves
 we are unequal to the Task. If we cri-
 ticise impartially on the Merit of our own
 Strength, we cannot but acknowledge
 that we stand in Need of a superior Aid,
 and sounder Principles, whereon to fix a
 firm and lasting Rule for the Conduct of
 our Lives.——Now this Aid, these
 Principles, and this Rule, are graciously

tendered to our Acceptance in the Gospel of Christ. Here is a rich and invaluable Magazine, furnished with the most precious Store. This is that copious, that inexhaustible River of God, which is full of Water; whose medicinal Streams purify the Heart, and exhilarate the Soul. Here are displayed those beautiful Life-Strokes, which we should labour to transpose into our own Breasts. Here we may reap a fruitful Harvest of the most exalted Truths, the noblest Instructions, and the purest Joys.—To say all at once; in this sacred Repository are contained the unsearchable Riches of the Mercy and Love of God; the transcendently gracious Privilege of the Redemption by Jesus Christ; and a most comfortable Assurance of the sanctifying Operations of the ever blessed Spirit.

A lively

A lively Faith in these sublime and distinguished Truths, a well grounded Hope, and an unfeigned Charity, will sooth every turbulent Passion of our Souls, and support us under the most difficult Trials of Life.—A Definition of these three great Christian Graces I beg Leave to recommend to your earnest Attention.—I shall enlarge upon each of them as they are placed in their Order, and are apparently deducible from the Words of the Text. “*Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*”

I. There is not perhaps a Subject within the whole Circle of Divinity, that has suffered more by the destructive Heats of Controversy, or been more perplexed by erroneous and obscure Meanings, than this of Faith.—May that unerringly wise, and most gracious Being, who directs
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every good Intention, and who alone can crown it with Success, enable me to define this Virtue in such a Manner, as corresponds with the genuine Import of his own Language, and as may be conducive to your immortal Interests! If I prove so happy as to gain this Point, my Intention will be compleatly answered, and my Labour recompenced in the highest Sense.

The Word *Faith*, I humbly conceive, admits of various particular and limited Explications in different Parts of Scripture. Sometimes it is appropriated to the Power of ^a working Miracles: At other Times it denotes ^b Affiduity, Faithfulness or Veracity: Again, it implies ^c a bare Assent of the Understanding to the Truths recorded in the Evangelical His-

^a Mat. xvii. 20.

^b Mat. xxiii. 23.

^c Jam. 2d Chap. passim.

tory; unattended with a suitable Conduct in Heart and Life. — I mention this Diversity of its Significations, for the Sake of Distinction only, and to guard you against any mistaken Notions, in Relation to a prime Article of that Religion, which you publicly, and, I hope I may add, (from your constant and regular Attendance in this Place) heartily profess. — It is not my Design to expatiate on any of the Interpretations above-mentioned; nor to perplex your Memories with a Quotation of all those several Passages, where the Sense of the Word under Consideration is manifestly varied by the sacred Penmen: as, I think, so nice and critical an Inspection could have no direct Tendency either to the Improvement of your Morals, or the Edification of your Souls. But I will endeavour to explain to you the Nature of this leading Prin-

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ciple,

ciple, in its most useful, weighty, and extensive Meaning.

Through this fingle Channel runs an agreeable Variety of Streams, which terminate in a fixed Point. A most pleasing View; that claims all our Attention! In the Object of Faith is comprehended both an History, and a Revelation. In the former we have one regular, though diversified Chain of Accounts, which leads us through certain intricate and blind Paths, till we arrive at a fair and unbounded Prospect; I mean the continued Process of Redemption from God's ^a first disclosing that gracious Design, till its full and perfect Completion in Jesus Christ: from the latter we derive an Idea (faint as it is) of whatever belongs to an eternal State of Exif-

^a Gen. iii. 15.

tence; both of the surpassing Joys of Heaven, the secure Inheritance of every good and faithful Servant, and of the agonizing Miseries of Hell, the inevitable Portion of unrepenting Sinners. When in the Retrospect, the Eye of Faith beholds the Sufferings of an expiring Lord, the Heart swells with Adoration, Gratitude, and Love; when it anticipates the Prospect, and surveys the blissful Regions of Futurity, it then pants with Hope, and is eager to qualify itself for a Possession of that Land, which will richly repay all its Labours. Thus in one Light, as it looks forward into Eternity, it is "*the Substance of things hoped for;*" in another, as it looks back on past Mercies, it is "*the Evidence of Things not seen.*"

We have an Instance of Faith's making its early Appearance in the World,

in * “ *Abel's offering unto God a more excellent Sacrifice than Cain.*” The stupendous Work of Creation was perhaps at that Time the only Basis it could find to rest upon ; and therefore, though a noble, yet a much inferior Support to that, which is now clearly presented to us. But as the World grew and multiplied, the Mercies of a beneficent God multiplied upon it. That narrow Horizon, which at first so much confined this delightful View, as we tread farther in the Paths of the sacred History, becomes more extensive. The distinguished Patriarch, the Father of the Faithful (tho' at that distant Period he could have but a dim and imperfect Sight) 'rejoiced to see the Day-spring from on high. Under the Mosaic Dispensation, which was promulged by God's own Authority, and

* Heb. xi. 4.

† St. John's Gospel, viii. 56.

inforced by the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, the Night grew still less dark. And doubtless the succeeding Generations had each of them stronger and more enlivening Conceptions of the glorious "*Sun of Righteousness*," the nearer they advanced towards the Dawn of the revealing Day. And when this broke out, every fleeting Cloud dispersed, and every other languid Light became quite extinct ; anxious Doubt was absorbed in full Assurance, and the Mists of Error vanished like the Morning-Dew. Then was there one continued Day-Light ; one clear Meridian-Blaze. From thence Life and Immortality sprung to Light. Then did the poor untutored Gentiles, as well as God's peculiar People Israel, feel the Heaven-directed Influence. Mere Rites and Ceremonies were then abolished, and a standing, rational, and divine Law was introduced in their Room.

Now, .

Now, a strong and settled Conviction of the Reality of all this ; namely, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is that “ *Sun of Righteousness*,” that grand Luminary, that sheds his peerless Lustre on our once benighted Land ; that he mercifully condescended to divest himself of all his Glory ; descended from the heavenly Mansions ; assumed corporeal Nature ; in that singular Instance of a pure, immaculate State of Humanity, lived, preached, and died for our Sakes ; that he sits now enthroned at the right Hand of the Majesty on high ; and will, at the last great Day of Accounts, assign to all his faithful and obedient Servants an everlasting Portion of consummate Bliss ; and denounce an endless and irrevocable Doom of Misery upon the impenitent Wicked ; and lastly, That the concurrent Assistance of the divine Spirit is indispensably necessary, and therefore
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ought humbly to be implored, in the great Work of Reconciliation ;—to have a full Conviction, I say, of all this deeply impressed upon the Mind, is to have a **TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH.**

Such, and such only, is that Faith which justifies : and for this evident Reason ; because such a Faith alone can direct its sincere Professors in the Paths of Righteousness and true Holiness. It is the Forerunner of Hope, Charity, and every other amiable Virtue. Without it Religion would be a Farce, and Eternity itself a frightful Chimera. It is such a Faith as this, which claims the Patronage of the highest Honour in the Christian System ; and that is—the Honour of **MAKING US GOOD.** Even the inestimable Benefit of our Redemption by Christ, and of our Sanctification by the Spirit, are both closely connected with this Design :
For

For St. Paul affirms that ^{*} “ *we are God’s Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works.*” And he also tells us that “ ^h *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, long-Suffering, Gentleness, Goodness.*” Indeed the whole Tenor of Scripture aims at this single Point. Which is not difficult to be accounted for, when we consider that, though Faith is the prime Motive, practical Piety is the only unexceptionable Proof of true Religion, and extends through every Part of the Christian Character. If we rob Faith of this Jewel, we take away all its Worth, and shall justly be condemned for so presumptuous an Offence. “ ⁱ *For without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*”

But when we behold Faith shining under the Influence of God’s Holy Spirit, in its own native Sphere ; and regard it

^{*} Ephes. ii. 10. ^h Gal. v. 22. ⁱ Heb. xii. 14:

as being productive of generous and Praise-worthy Actions; as a true Guide to every divine and social Duty; in this Sense we deservedly style it the Guardian of the Christian Name. When we view it in this Light, we cannot forbear crying out—Thou lovely, thou divine Principle!—Thou strong and insurmountable Barrier of all Virtue, and of all Happiness! Thou Spring of every real Pleasure; and thou kind Soother of all the Pains of Life! By thy Power it is that we are enabled to conquer every Difficulty; to resist the pressing Temptations of this vain World; and to confine our most predominant Passions within the Limits of Reason and Religion. Soaring on thy Wings Imagination takes its Flight into that happy Climate, from whence no Traveller shall ever wish to return; and, unhinging the Doors of this earthly

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Prison,

Prison, bursts open into the transcendent Joys of Eternity.

I am afraid indeed (I wish the Fear was groundless) that there are some People, elated by warm Affections, and chimerical Ideas, who depend on Faith alone as a perfectly saving Grace ; and whose Hopes of Salvation center in the imputed Righteousness of a Saviour, and a total Recumbency on his Merits, as being all-sufficient without any Co-operation of their own :——Wild Notions these ! which, like an inveterate Fever in the Body, instead of strengthening and invigorating, weaken and impair the noblest Faculties of the Soul ; and, like that too, consume as they inflame.

Far different Lessons do we learn from the durable Monuments of Holy Writ. Men of unquestionable Wisdom bid us
harbour

harbour more worthy Sentiments of a Religion so pure as ours.—In Objection then to this dangerous Extreme, let me observe that the Gospel abounds with numberless Exhortations to an uniform virtuous Course of Life. To this End it prescribes the best Rules, and stimulates by the most persuasive and encouraging Motives. All the Meagrim of Fanaticism, and the idle Dreams of Enthusiastic Folly fly before it. In this divine Book are stamped the fairest and most perfectly intelligible Characters. Pity it is that they should ever be misrepresented. That pleasing parabolical Method in which our Saviour frequently conveyed his Instructions; comparing Candidates for Heaven with “*Labourers in the Vineyard*,” and urging their Care and Diligence, as Persons with whom Talents were intrusted to be improved, clearly represents the Christian State in a

continued Scene of Action. But not to descend into Particulars; it may well suffice to refer you at once to his admirable Sermon on the Mount. How full and expressive is this beautiful Epitome of the whole Duty of Man! If the pious and most excellent Rules contained herein are not worthy to be complied with; if it is not necessary to exert our Faculties in adhering to them as closely as we can; why were they so warmly recommended by the great and eternal Law-giver? why so peremptorily enjoined as the Conditions of our Happiness? O why was there made such Waste of all this precious Ointment? Surely we cannot suppose the Doctrines advanced by such a Teacher to be superfluous; or that any Precept could proceed, without a Meaning, from that unerring Mouth. Nor can it therefore correspond with either Reason or Scripture to expect Salvation

vation upon the Strength of a bare Belief in this Divine Person (how strong soever may be our Pretensions of Love and Zeal for his Name) so long as we persist in an obstinate Violation of his sacred Laws. Such a delusive Expectation as this would be contrary to the ultimate Design of his Mission, and manifestly repugnant to the revealed Copy of his Will. I appeal to his own Declaration ; * “ *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*” And he reminds us in a most solemn and awful Manner, that † “ *the Hour is coming in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life ; and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damna-*

* Mat. vii. 21.

† St. John's Gospel, v. 28. 29.

tion.”

tion." No Language can be more explicit.

And you cannot, I think, want to be reminded that the Doctrine of the Apostles was in all Points consistent with that of their great Master. An absolute and perfect Harmony subsisted betwixt them. They give us true Notions of this probationary State under the significant Emblems of a Race, a Pilgrimage, and a Warfare. How strongly do these Similitudes urge the Necessity of our own Endeavours ! not only to curb our headstrong Passions, and mortify our inordinate Lusts, resolutely abstaining from the fatal Indulgence of any single habitual Vice ; but to advance forwards in a Course of Piety and Virtue ; ^m "*pressing toward the Mark for the Prize of the*

^m Philip. iii. 14.

high Calling of God in Christ Jesus." Nay there is scarce a Page in the New-Testament, which does not either express or imply a Necessity of human Co-operation with divine Grace, in Order to the Attainment of everlasting Happiness.

But it is fondly and pertinaciously insisted on by the *Antinomians*, that Salvation, in several Parts of Scripture, particularly in the Writings of Saint Paul, is attributed to Faith alone, exclusive of good Works.

'Tis with real and undiffembled Pleasure that I acknowledge how fervent this great Teacher was in vindicating the Honour, and magnifying the Glory of his dear Lord and Saviour; zealously contending for the Merits of that ample Satisfaction, that was made for all peni-

tent Sinners and true Believers ; and, as much as possible, stemming the Torrent of Infidelity, which was so very impetuous, and spread itself so wide. What he labours to prove, is, that, as ^a “ *all have sinned (both Jews and Gentiles) and come short of the Glory of God,*” it is not possible that any one should be justified by the Works of the Law ; but that our Offences must be obliterated by Virtue of that great Sacrifice alone, which was offered upon the Cross ; and that it is by God’s free Mercy in the spotless Purity of his beloved Son, that Sinners are restored into Favour, and accepted in his Sight ; ^o “ *for as by one Man’s Disobedience many were made Sinners, so by the Obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*” Certain it is, that if the Law could have been kept without Violation, or had Man been in a Capacity of saving him-

^a Rom. iii. 23.

^o Rom. v. 19.

self, Redemption would have been a superfluous Thing. But since Infirmities are involved in our Nature, and Reason itself is vitiated and depraved; since, in Consequence of Adam's Transgression, we are alienated from God, and Imperfection attends our best Services; we must depend on that " *Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ;*" we must infer " *that a Man is justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law.*" — Thus doth our Apostle confirm his first Position, that " *the Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" And we cannot but acquiesce in his invincible Method of Reasoning; and not only acquiesce, but pour out our Souls in rapturous Praises and Thanksgivings for that ever-memorable Propitia-

† Rom. iii. 22. † Rom. iii. 28. † Rom. i. 16.

tion that was made for the Sins of Man.

But now, whoever peruses the Writings of this eminent Preacher of the Gospel, with any Degree of Impartiality, cannot be ignorant how strongly he enforces the Obligation of Obedience upon every human Creature to the Will of the Creator. So far is he from allowing the least Encouragement to confide in a quiescent, fruitless Faith, that, like some wise Master-Builder, he makes it his Corner-Stone for this very Purpose; that he might raise upon it the most beautiful and magnificent Fabrick of GOOD WORKS. Directing himself to Titus, he thus admonishes him, ‘*In all Things shewing thyself a Pattern of good Works.*’ And thus again, with great Fervency,

• Tit. ii. 7.

‘*This*

"This is a faithful Saying, and these Things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good Works."

And after many useful and pious Exhortations to the Hebrews, just before the Conclusion of his Epistle, he breathe's this ardent and pathetic Wish; *"Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ."* The Time would fail me to enumerate the multiplicity of Passages of a * similar Purport, which adorn the Compositions of this excellent Author. Only further allow me to re-

^t Tit. iii. 8.

^u Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

* See his Epistle to the Ephesians, passim.

commend to your Consideration some of the * concluding Chapters of his Epistles to the Romans. Never did the Pen of Man draw a more perfect Picture of pure Morality than is here described. Observe how exquisitely he frames his divine Plan. Having justly vilified the Merits of mere human Nature, and declared the Invalidity of the Mosaic Law, he proceeds to prove, from irresistible Arguments, the Justification of Man by Faith in Christ; and then, to crown all, he lays before us (in the Chapters above-mentioned) certain Rules, by which we may infallibly judge whether we are possessed of this justifying Faith or not: If we are, we shall † “ *present our Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable Service. And we shall not be conformed to this World; but be trans-*

* Particularly Chap. xii. & xiii.

† Rom. xii. 1, 2.

formed

formed by the renewing of our Mind ; that we may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect Will of God."—Thus, in Conformity to the Doctrine of another Apostle, " *by Works Faith is made perfect.*" It is the Good Tree, which, flourishing under the benign Influence of the blessed Spirit, and cultivated also by our own Industry, bears good Fruit.—It is the Parent of all true Obedience to the Commands of God.

The Result of the whole Argument is reduced to this : If it be true that Jesus Christ "*came to call Sinners to Repentance ;*" if he "*left us an Example that we might follow his Steps ;*" if at the final Audit of the World, " *we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be*

† St. Jam. ii. 22.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.

good

good or bad ;" if it be true that the Arguments of Saint Paul are consistent one with another, and that he does not intend to overthrow in one Passage a Doctrine, which in several others it is his Business to establish ; if he is in real Earnest when he says that ¹ "*the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men ; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World ;*" and also that ² "*all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God ; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness : that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works ;*" and lastly if it be true that other Writers, who were inspired by the same God, advanced the same Doctrine ; — then is it also incontestibly true that we can be

¹ Tit. ii. 11, 12. ² 2 Epistle to Tim. iii. 16. 17.

saved only by a PRACTICAL FAITH; by that Faith, which (under the Direction and Assistance of God's Grace) "*worketh by Love,*" and produceth the genuine Fruits of sincere Repentance, and habitual Holiness.

This valuable Subject is of so copious and extensive a Nature, that to proceed upon it at present, I am doubtful, would tire your Attention. I intend therefore (with God's Permission) to address Myself to You in the remaining Part of it another Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c. AMEN.

I COR. xiii. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH,
HOPE, CHARITY, THESE
THREE; BUT THE GREATEST
OF THESE IS CHARITY.

HAVING in a former Discourse from these Words treated on the Article of Faith in its only useful and important Signification; and having clearly proved that it cannot possibly be in any other Sense instrumental to your Happiness in a future World, than as it leads you into a virtuous Course of Action, and is promotive of good Works; I now proceed to enquire into the Nature of the

II. SECOND Article under Consideration; which is HOPE.

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Hope

Hope is that rich and pleasant Cordial, that sweetens every bitter Potion ; which, under any oppressive Emergency, even when Necessity calls loudest for Relief, revives the drooping Heart. It is the Mind's sovereign soother, when laden with the heaviest Burthens. It is its kind and sweet Restorative, when almost tired out with fullen Cares. And when the Body wrestles with acute Pains, or labours under dire Diseases, Hope is its tenderest, its most consolatory Physician, and seldom expires but with Life itself. And indeed this Span of Life is chequered with such a Variety of Miseries and Afflictions, that if Hope was excluded, it would doubtless become an insupportable Load ; it would however be still far more miserable, and that Span, short as it is, more contracted. But an all-wise, and unchangeable Providence, which orders all Things for the best, and
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the peculiar GOODNESS of which reflects an amiable Lustre on all the other Attributes of God, has implanted this Virtue in the Breast of Man, to render the Troubles of Life at least supportable, and to prompt him through all the different Scenes of it. Thus graciously has the Supreme Being dealt with Mankind in general. He seldom administers the distasteful Cup, but, as an alleviating Antidote, infuses into it some cordial Drops.

If we view this Topic in any other Point of Light, it will afford us the same agreeable Prospect. The Landscape throughout the whole will be the same, but the Eye will be more or less delighted according to the several Parts that it surveys.—Hope, this universal Favourite, smiles on all Circumstances, and all Conditions; on the wretched as well as hap-

py : She supports the one, and animates the other. She reaches out her welcome Hand to the humble Cottager, as well as to the crowned Head. The illiterate Labourer, and the mean Mechanic, claim an equal Share of her Favours with the Learned and the Great. Thus, the Scholar treads the painful Labyrinths of Study, and with incessant Labour cultivates his Genius, from the Hope of gaining a more refined Taste in every useful and important Science. The aspiring Heroe plans the military Line, and confronts the rough Edge of War, which he prefers to the insipid Sweetness of an indolent and obscure Life, because he hopes to purchase, by his singular Atchievements, a deathless Fame. Ask the Merchant why he traverses the Seas, "*and occupies his Business in those great Waters?*" Why he combats the raging Hurricane, and exposes himself to the wild

wild Fury of the merciless Waves? He will tell you he despises all Storms and Dangers from the Hope he entertains of advancing his Fortunes. Observe also the laborious Husbandman: How resolutely he bends under a perpetual Rotation of Care and Fatigue! See the glad Soil improve by the Nutriment it has borrowed from his industrious Hand! And while he scatters his Seed, behold him bedew it with his Sweat! Could he with equal Courage and Alacrity spin out so many toilsome Hours, was he not supported by this very probable Hope; that he shall see those Fields, which now appear so barren and naked, flourish again; re-adorned with their beautifully waving Vestments; and, at the Return of the Season, reward his Pains?

Whatever then our Enterprises are,
 Hope is the engaging Motive. It may
 be

be styled the main Spring of Action, And though it is sometimes a flattering Idea, and exists barely in the Imagination, yet it is so nice and pleasing a Deception, that it anticipates Joys, which even in Foretaste exceed any that we really possess.

But if we confine our Reflections in particular to the GOOD CHRISTIAN'S Hope, we shall harbour Conceptions of a very different Kind. A Scene pregnant with the most interesting Discoveries will open to our View. Let us represent to ourselves a Man of this Character struggling under a Complication of the most pungent Calamities. Think how he is tossed in the turbulent Sea of Life ! How many Vicissitudes of Clouds and Sunshine he encounters in the Voyage ! That he has passed through all the Changes of capricious Fortune. In the florid Morning
 5 of

of his Days recollect how God crowned him with Honour! That he was then blessed with as many Comforts and Advantages, as large Possessions could administer, and this mortal State admit of. — And suppose him now in the most destitute and forlorn Condition; — stripped of all those Blessings, which Providence had so plentifully showered upon him. His Riches have taken Wings and fled. And Health, that precious Jewel, that brightened every other Enjoyment, he has now lost. Consider him also as forsaken by his Acquaintance, and despised by his once familiar Friends. Those very Persons, who did eat of his Bread, and drank of his Cup, and who, it might reasonably be expected, should now endeavour to sooth his Sorrows, and mitigate his Pains, are become Reproachers of his Integrity, and instead of alleviating, insult his Woes. — O this Ingratitude!

titude! this marble-hearted Monster!—
 Say, is there any Foe human Nature has
 to engage with, equal to this?—Yes;
 Death, that relentless Archer, has shot a
 Dart sharper than even Ingratitude can
 point:—It has torn from him for ever
 his only Bosom-Friend—twisted closely
 to the Fibres of his Heart—as dear to
 him as that Heart itself—a faithful
 Partner, who shared in all his Sufferings,
 and heightened all his Joys—to whom
 he communicated every Secret of his
 Soul:—Ah! this is the deepest Wound
 he has received from the Almighty's per-
 missive Hand;—He feels it in the ten-
 derest Part—It pierces the Apple of his
 Eye.—In short, imagine him to sustain
 the blackest Combination of Evils that
 Flesh is Heir to.—Still God is his Hope
 and Strength; a very sure and constant
 Help in this amazing Variety of
 Troubles. He pretends not indeed (like
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the obdurate Stoic) to shake off the Feelings of Mortality, and pronounce actual Pain to be no Pain : But that steady and unalterable Trust, which he reposes in the tender Mercies of his God, and the Merits of his Christ (the most illustrious Sufferer that ever appeared in the World) softens all his Sorrows, and pours Balm into every Sore. And that Grace, which was sufficient to carry him triumphant through all the flattering Scenes of a gay and flourishing State, he now fully hopes will support him in the Time of extreme Distress. These Arrows that stick so fast in him he hopes God will either wholly extract, or abate their Pungency, or enable him to bear them with a proper Degree of Fortitude, and an entire Resignation to his divine Will. He considers them as levelled by the Hand of Heaven, for some wise and gracious Purpose above the Reach of all human Fore-

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fight :—perhaps to prevent a certain fatal Emergency which was coming upon him unguarded ; or otherwise to prove his Fidelity, give a fresh Lustre to his Virtue, and thereby intitle him to a brighter Jewel in the eternal Crown. This is a Consideration worth all the rest. Here his Hope swells the highest. It inspires into his Bosom a secret inexpressible Comfort and Tranquillity, which all the Pleasures of the World cannot give, nor its Miseries united take away. Animated with this, he is so far from sinking into Despondency, or rashly exclaiming against Providence, that he blesses the mighty Arm that wounds him, and prays with humble Confidence that his

^a “ *light Affliction, which (comparatively speaking) is but for a Moment, may work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*” This is what inclines

^a 2 Cor. iv. 17.

him to turn his Eyes and Affections from every gloomy Prospect of this Life, and to fix them on that serene Country, where Afflictions cannot follow him; where Deceit and Perfidy can find no Room; where no Cares perplex—no Pains torment;—but where he shall possess an uninterrupted Series of pure, substantial, inconceivable, immortal Joys.

Such is the Hope of the GOOD CHRISTIAN. It extends from Time into Eternity. And upon such Grounds it highly concerns every one of us to examine our Consciences; to ask them these material Questions; Whether they are so happy as to be endowed with this delightful Privilege? Whether this pleasing Hope and Expectation of the Divine Favour here, and endless Bliss hereafter, excites our Activity in the Christian Race? Whether this is our strong Fence

against every Storm? our sweet Consolation, and solid Support, under all Trials and Afflictions? And particularly, whether we never flatter ourselves in a Matter of so great Importance?—Every Member without doubt, of the holy Catholic-Church, will express Hopes of Salvation after Death. But allow me to ask; On what Basis is your Hope grounded?—Perhaps you will answer; On the Mercies of God in Christ.—But have you Reason to hope that you are intitled to those Mercies? For the promise of Salvation is not absolute, but conditional. Salvation will not be irresistibly imposed upon you, but is offered to your Choice on such Terms as are plainly set down in the written Word of God. Are you then conscious to yourselves that you pay a strict Attention to God's general Purpose in all his wise Dispensations? Do you heartily endea-

your to conform to his sacred Laws? Is it your principal and most endearing Study to please your Master, your Saviour, your best Friend, who died for your Sakes? Do you repent sincerely of every past Transgression? And do you beg the Direction and Assistance of the good Spirit of God in every future Step you take? Unless you can honourably acquit yourselves upon such a Trial, you will find, to your unutterable Sorrow, that your Hope is built on a sandy Foundation. And when the Storm of God's Indignation arises, and beats upon it, it will vanish as a Dream; and many bitter Reflections, Heart-galling Remorse, and black Despair will succeed in its Room.

III. The last of those eminent Duties proposed to our present Meditations, is CHARITY.

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We have so fine and masterly a Description of this peculiarly Christian and god-like Virtue in the Chapter before us, that I need only recommend it to your serious Perusal. You will however observe in general that the Word Charity comprehends, in its most exalted and sublime Sense, a sincere Love of the Supreme God; and in Consequence thereof, an unlimited and universal Benevolence towards Man: And is therefore the distinguishing Criterion of all true Religion. It is like some grand and capacious Reservoir, from whence numberless refreshing Streams derive their Source. Tell me but of a charitable Man, and you comprize in that single Term ten thousand amiable Qualities. With what a graceful Humility does one of this Disposition conduct himself to all his Superiors! loving, honouring, and administering all possible Comfort to his

Parents

Parents above the rest of Mankind ; and regarding them as placed in the highest and most immediate Authority over him, next to the common Parent of all the Earth : Such a one is utterly incapable of imbruing his Hands in the Blood of his dear Fellow-Creature : He knows nothing of that Barbarity, which stains the chaste Connubial Bed: He cannot, like those steeled Hearts unsusceptible of all the delicate Feelings of Humanity, plunder the Fatherless and Widow, build upon another Man's Ruin to advance his own Fortunes, or defraud any one of his Property to supply his Wants : He is no Author of any subtle Insinuations, no Propagator of any injurious Reports against his Neighbour's Character; abhorring so much the very Intention of undermining his Honour, or loading him with false Aspersions, that he rather chuses to conceal his Imperfections, and
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to draw a Veil over his Faults; never publishing these, but from such laudable Motives as tend to the Glory of God, and the Reformation of Man: His Heart is the ever constant Dictator to his Tongue, and his Words are the real Transcript of his Heart: He envies not the Prosperity, nor covets the Possessions of another; but sits down calm and contented in that Station wherein Providence has fixed him; believing that God “*will never leave him nor forsake him.*” He is too sensible of the Obligations of his Duty to HIM to infringe deliberately upon any Part of that Law, which an unerring Penman has pronounced “*Charity fulfills.*”——Yet he does not stop at a Compliance with negative Duties only, but passes on to positive; to such as are more refined. Affability, Truth, and Honour are his inseparable Companions. These he carries
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along with him through every Stage of Life. In Relation to his Friends, he is warm, steady, and disinterested; to his Enemies, forgiving, benevolent, and hearty in Prayer for their Conversion. The Poor and Needy are sure in him to find the compassionate Christian. He esteems it his Privilege as well as Duty to relieve their Wants and lighten the Burthen of their Griefs. But his loftiest Aim is to promote the Edification of the Souls of Men. This is a Concern that fits closest to his Heart. Here divine and human Love unite their incomparable Charms. And when the gracious Aid of Omnipotence joins him, and gives Success to his spiritual Labours, what a cœlestial Ardor does he feel! (which indeed is only to be felt, but not described) What an Effusion of Bliss is poured upon his Head! With what Heart-felt Joy does he apply that beautiful Simile

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of the Prophet to himself! ^b “*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever.*”—O ye voluptuaries! who sap the Foundation of your Health in Riot, and drown your Honour in the luxurious Bowl; can any of your inordinate Revels bestow one Moment’s Pleasure equal to this? Tell me, ye sordid Misers! who catch at empty Bubbles, and are regardless of substantial Joys; ye whose Affections are so passionately fixed on the perishing Things of this World, that ye neglect to lay up Treasures that will never decay; can all your golden Dreams impart a Satisfaction to be compared with that Man’s, who, in the scriptural Meaning, “*casts his Bread upon the Waters;*” whose liberal Hand has snatched some worthy Family from the

^b Dan. xii. 3.

Brink of Ruin ; who has been attentive to the Cries of the helpless Orphan, challenging his Pity, and “ *made the Widow’s Heart sing for Joy?*” And, Oh ye fierce and implacable Monsters ! you who are hurried down the rapid Stream of wild Resentment, and are loading your poor Brother with the whole Weight of your Ire ; can that sweet Revenge of yours (falsely so called) afford you the least Portion of that true Comfort, Harmony, and Peace, which he enjoys, whose Breast glows with Gratitude, Meekness, and an unexceptionable brotherly Love ?

I cannot dismiss this Part of my Subject without observing that Charity is called the greatest of those celestial Graces mentioned in the Text, because the two former will be only beneficial as they promote the latter ; and because, in

the future World, when Faith shall be swallowed up in Assurance, and Hope lost in Enjoyment, Charity alone will enter the heavenly Mansions, and there abide to all Eternity.

And now, my Beloved Brethren ! give me Leave, in the Conclusion, to exhort you to pursue with Ardor a manly, rational, steady Course of Piety and intrinsic Goodness. Meditate seriously and often on the chief End and Design of your Creation. Consider the main Reasons why you were brought upon the Theatre of this World ; what Part you are engaged to act ; the Authority of that Power to whom you are engaged ; and the Shortness as well as Uncertainty of the Time of Action. Consider that you are not to die for ever, but are Candidates for a Life that has no Period ; that your final Appointment in another State will

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certainly be determined according to your Behaviour in this; that not all the boasted Confidence of Faith, nor the loftiest Flights of misguided Zeal can save you, if you lead wicked and impenitent Lives; that all your Thoughts, Words, and Actions lie open to the Omniscient God, and will be pronounced upon for Eternity.—O may the severity of your Maker, on the one Hand, deter you from offending him, and his Goodness, on the other, excite your Obedience to his Commands!—Remember that if you kindle his Wrath, without appeasing it by a timely and sincere Repentance, you will be everlastingly ruined. Think on that dreadful, irreverfible Sentence denounced againft all obdurate Sinners, “*Go, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire!*” And think also every Day, every Hour of your Lives, on the numberlefs unparalleled Instances you have of Divine Goodness
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and Compassion. Think what wonderful, what endearing Methods your God has taken to engage a Return of your Affections, and to prevail on you to pursue your own Happiness : How He formed you in the Womb : How He brought you into Existence : How He guards and preserves you every Moment that you breathe ; And how He is constantly pouring Blessings upon your Heads,—— But, what is still more affecting, still infinitely more engaging than all this, and which is by far the strongest Testimony of his Love, think especially on the REDEMPTION of your Souls. Behold, through the transparent Glass of Faith, the Lord of the Universe descending from above ! See Him invested in your own Nature, and veil the Brightness of his Glory in a Body of Flesh ! Hear that melting and pathetic Voice, which, in the midst of the most exquisite Tortures,

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tutters nothing but Mercy and Pardon! View Him extended on the Cross, and that sanguine Stream issuing from his Side! He dies even for the Sake of his Enemies upon that infamous Tree: And he pours out his precious Blood in pure Regard to those very People by whom that Blood was shed:—Be astonished, O Heavens! and rejoice, O Earth! Rejoice, tremble, and adore, ye Sons of Men! This is the great Work of Reconciliation and Atonement; this the stupendous Work, by which the most merciful God has been pleased to expiate your Sins; and it is one Instance more of his boundless and unexampled Love, which crowns Millions of others.

Apply these Considerations to your Hearts, my Brethren, and surely they cannot fail of having a due Influence upon you. They cannot but awaken in
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you such a grateful Sense of the Love of God, and such an Aversion to the Odiousness of Sin, as will secure to you Peace of Mind here, and inconceivable Felicity hereafter. 'Tis true, your Nature is depraved, and many dangerous Bruises have been contracted by the Fall; the fatal Consequences of which are deplorably manifest: But do not yet despond: Redemption dignifies your Nature still: You are still the Sons of Immortality, and Heirs to an incorruptible Crown. And can you possibly miscarry, when blessed with such Privileges, and encouraged by such a Prospect? Can you persist in debasing that Nature, which the Son of God has so greatly, so miraculously honoured? Can Beings of so high a Rank, can Lords of this lower World, for the Sake of a few fleeting sensual Pleasures, sink themselves into a State even below Brutality? Can they
forget

forget that superior Appointment assigned them above the rest of the Creation, and the only valuable End for which they were both created and redeemed?— Surely no! O do not be thus ungrateful to your great Creator and Redeemer, and thus perfidious to yourselves, Do not trespass too far upon the Mercy of God, infinite as it is; but remember that Justice is connected with it. They are both shining Attributes in the Divine Nature. And do not make the Wounds of his Beloved Son bleed afresh, by the Commission of any actual, deliberate Sin. But repent sincerely of every past Transgression, and let that sacred Name, in which you profess to believe, be ever honoured for the future in your Lives and Conversations.—Let the Love of Christ, of Virtue, and of yourselves, combine together.

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Take especial Care also that you be not deceived in the weighty Matters of your Religion. She has fairly proclaimed her Will, and has strongly invited you to accept of her Instructions. Attend then without Prejudice to her attractive Voice. Mistake not her own native Meaning. But avoid by all Means possible *Enthusiasm* on one Side, and *Self-Sufficiency* on the other. The former, instead of stamping the fair Impressions of a Gospel-Faith, will expose you to the Delusions of Fancy, or the boisterous Sallies of a disturbed Imagination ; it will render you liable to mistake the Swellings of Pride and Conceit for the genuine Marks of cœlestial Hope, and the Vanity of Pomp and Ostentation for that true Charity, which does not play about the Head only, but reaches the inward Recesses of the Heart. The latter will make you regardless of the graceful Charms

Charms of Humility, and forgetful of your Dependence on that Providential Goodness, without which you must not expect to be happy either in this World, or the next.—Both these Extremes are equally dangerous to your future Welfare. They are the two formidable Rocks, which thousands have split upon. Your safe Passage is to steer betwixt them. Be prevailed on to take that Faith for your Pilot, which was recommended to you in the former Part of this Subject, and you cannot go wrong. In vain will it be, without it to expect ever to reach the Harbour of eternal Peace.—And above all Things address the Divine Majesty in humble, hearty, and incessant Prayers for the Direction and Assistance of his Holy Spirit; that you may be resigned under all the Sufferings, and enabled to subdue all the vicious Allurements, of this troublesome and sinful

World: that you may be strengthened and encouraged in every good Thought, Word, and Work: That Faith, together with Hope and Charity, and that lovely Train of all the other concomitant Graces, which adorn and dignify the Christian Profession, may join Hand in Hand.

May that same Spirit give you and me Grace to make such a practical Improvement upon this Advice, as that we may obtain (through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ) in his own due Time, the glorious "*End of our Faith, even the Salvation of our immortal Souls!*"

AMEN.

F I N I S.